

THE EYE—A SIMILITUDE

NO. 904

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Keep me as the apple of the eye.”
Psalm 17:8.

THIS prayer is full of meaning, and is the outflow of a well-instructed mind; it is no parrot cry, but the leaping up of a living desire from a grace-taught and thoughtful heart. The man knows something of himself who sincerely offers this plaintive petition to his God, “Keep *me*.” Is there not a deep and sorrowful confession implied in this brief utterance of the suppliant? As though he should say, “Preserve me from my own heart, for it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: guard me from the rising up of my natural corruptions, for the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. Defend me from the turbulence of my own passions, those household foes which are the worst enemies to the peace and purity of my mind; keep me, O God, from that evil man, myself.” Has not the man who utters this request a clear perception of the evils surrounding him in his circumstances, and his relations and his position in life? Conscious of danger, he desires to be held back from pride, if he is in prosperity; and to be withheld from pining and unbelief, if he is in adversity; he would be restrained from sinning in public or transgressing in private; he desires that he may not be imperiled even by the objects of his joy and affection, lest they should become idols, and so provoke the Lord to jealousy, and cause Him to withdraw His dear presence and sweet communings from the soul. The prayer has a singular sensitiveness; it seems to shiver like the leaves of the aspen, to shrink like the sensitive plant. Knowing that there are snares all around him, the pleading soul is desirous that God should at all times encompass his path—“Keep me.” The man has some idea of the craft and malice of Satan, therefore he appeals to God that he may be preserved from that fowler who first decoys, and afterwards destroys unguarded souls. He sees his danger; he feels his weakness, and seeks to the strong for help—

*“Love and keep us, blessed Jesus,
Keep us from denying Thee;
Keep our wayward feet from straying
Into paths of vanity;
Love and keep us, blessed Jesus,
Keep us from denying Thee.”*

The eyes that have looked on the weakness and the wickedness of the little world within our bosom, rain with briny tears the supplication, “Keep me.”

But the man who prays thus intelligently must have some knowledge of the God he prays to. He has learned the vanity of all other reliances, and has left forever the arm of flesh. The invocation is addressed to the Most High, for he is well aware that no other can respond to his call, or interpose for his aid; he who uses this prayer intelligently perceives the omniscience of Jehovah. “You see all my dangers, You foresee all the attacks of my enemies, You are acquainted with all my ways; to You, therefore, I look for safeguard. Better than a hundred eyes are You to me, You who can see all my foes, from whichever quarter they may come. Ever watchful guardian, keep me.” He believes also in God’s omnipotence, that there is no assailant so strong as He who is His Israel’s refuge and fortress, nor is there any danger so imminent that He cannot anticipate and avert it. He relies, moreover, upon the love of God that He is willing of His own heart to espouse his interests; he relies upon the faithfulness of God that He will perform the mercy promised to the fathers, and upon the immutability of God that He will never turn back, but finally achieve the salvation of His servant through keeping him to the end.

Thus, as I have said, the man who could first offer, and the man who can constantly appreciate this devout prayer must know something of himself, and something of his God. He who has learned these two things has mastered the elements of wisdom. “Man, know yourself,” said the heathen sage, and he uttered a goodly maxim. “Man, know your God,” says the Christian, and he points to wisdom far more sublime. Put the two together! To know ourselves in our weakness and dangers, and to know our God in His glorious strength and willingness to protect us, is to have the seed of divine knowledge implanted in our breasts! Knowing these two things we can not only pray this prayer with a fervent spirit, but there are many things which we shall be enabled to do by virtue of the good hand of the Lord our God upon us. Such, then, is the importunate request of the psalmist, to which I am persuaded everyone that is godly among you will say, “Amen.” “Keep me as the apple of the eye.”

Now, brothers and sisters, I intend only to touch upon one point, and that is the metaphor here used—not, perhaps, limiting myself entirely to the precise and definite meaning which it in this place presents, but uttering with more freedom and latitude some of the thoughts which it suggests.

1. The keeping desired by the earnest Christian is of that kind which men accord to the apple of the eye. What sort of keeping is this?—First, the psalmist as good as prays, Lord, keep me *with many guards and protections*. In the providence of God, the apple of the eye is defended with peculiar care and transcendent skill; those who have studied the formation of the pupil itself will tell you with how many coats the retina is preserved; then the most common observer knows how the eyebrows, the eyelashes, and the eyelids are formed as outworks, fences, and barricades to protect the pupil of the eye, which is thus made to dwell securely like a citizen within the entrenchments of a fortified town. God has bestowed extraordinary pains upon all that concerns your eyes. Being one of the tenderest organs of the physical frame, He has used many devices that it should be well preserved, notwithstanding its exceeding sensitiveness. Nor is it merely sheltered in its own fastness, but sentries keep ward lest it should be exposed to peril; whenever it is threatened with even the appearance of danger, no time is lost in consultation with yourself, but with agility so brisk that it seems almost involuntary, the arm is lifted up, and the hand is raised to screen it from harm or to resist attack, and if you are about to stumble, you naturally put out your hands to save your eyes. Instinct seems to teach you at once the value of eyesight, and your whole strength is put forth to preserve it. In fact, all the members of the body may be regarded as a patrol for the safekeeping of the eyes, and all the incorporated powers of manhood are in constant vigilance to guard and protect that precious orb. Admiring then, this beautiful arrangement to conserve the delicate organ of vision, we may pray, “Lord, keep me as the apple of the eye, with many protections; You have been pleased with the strong bastions of Your providence to surround Your people. I ask for such protection; lead me not into temptation; do not allow the events of my career, or the incidents of my daily life to entangle me so that I shall be unable to escape out of the perplexing snares. Let the powers of heaven fight for me as of old the stars in their courses fought against Sisera; let me be in league with the stones of the field, and command the beasts of the forest to be at peace with me; let my tabernacle be in peace, and let no plague come near my dwelling. Do, O God, visit my habitation, and so abide with me beneath that lowly roof that I may not by any means through outward circumstances or inward thoughts be led into sin. Guard me, O my God, by all the power of those mysterious wheels whose motions I cannot understand, but of whose results You have said, ‘All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.’ And, Lord, be pleased to shield me by Your grace as well as by Your providence; keep me as the apple of the eye with tutelage of Your restraining mercy. Teach me to sing—

*‘Oh, to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I’m constrained to be.’”*

Brothers and sisters, how wonderfully does divine grace preserve the heirs of heaven with operations marvelously diverse, but all fulfilling one loving purpose! Sometimes grace lowers me into the dust; at other times it lifts me up to the truth of God! It is divine grace that empties, and divine grace that fills my earthen vessel! It is grace that shows me my ignorance, and grace that makes me wise unto salvation. Let the manifold operations of Your grace, O God of all grace, be brought into full play to guard me as the apple of the eye! Whenever I hear a sermon preached, may it keep me from stumbling, lest otherwise

my feet should trip; whenever I bow my knees in prayer, may it be a safeguard against some temptation or besetting sin which otherwise might have been too strong to resist; when I read Your book, make its words to be as wholesome counsel, and faithful warning to deliver my soul from the paths of the destroyer. Grant unto us, Lord, that the ordinances of Your house—baptism and the Lord's supper, yes, and whatever else You have enjoined to us by precept, or handed down to us with the example of Your holy apostles; things commanded, and things set in order, let all these be used as auxiliaries to repel assault, and preserve our peace! From wandering into any false way, from staining the purity of a good conscience, from bringing dishonor upon the name of Christ, "good Lord, deliver us." "Keep me as the apple of the eye" with the guardianship of Your Holy Spirit; O that the Divine Comforter might always dwell within me, so that when Satan comes to invade my heart, it may be like the house in which abides the strong man armed, who is stronger than the spoiler, and therefore keeps his goods in peace! Thus shall He drive away the thief who would break in to steal my possessions, and make me his prey—

*"Keep us, Lord, O keep us ever,
Vain our hope if left by Thee!
We are Yours, O leave us never,
Till Your face in heaven we see.
There to praise you
Through a bright eternity."*

Holy Spirit, I invoke You, whether reproving or comforting, whether quickening or enlightening, whether chastening or sanctifying, whether humbling or perfecting me—be pleased to abide with me, and hold Your watch over me in all Your sevenfold power, in all Your diversified operations.

And, O God, let Your angels have charge concerning me, to keep me in all my ways, for I need many guards, even as the eye has many bulwarks! Bid, then, those ministering spirits, who minister to the heirs of salvation that they bear me up in their hands lest I dash my foot against a stone! Brothers and sisters, do such appeals seem to you like a rhapsody? Do you forget the existence of angels, who excel in strength? Do you give no heed to the capacities with which they are endowed by Him who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire? I am afraid we are apt to think too lightly of those blessed spirits. Is it necessary to remind you that the being of such an order of God's creatures is not an allegory of the poets, no, not even of sacred inspired poets! Facts abound in both the Old and New Testaments to attest the reality of their services; have you never heard how that in the creation, when God laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? And have you not heard that when the law was given to Moses, it was received by the disposition of angels? You cannot be unaware of the comfort which Daniel found from the mission of Gabriel when, while speaking in prayer, the angel appeared as a man flying swiftly, touched the prophet, talked with him, brought a message to him from heaven, and came forth to give him skill and understanding? Think, I beseech you, brothers and sisters, of the company of angels caroling that sweet hymn of the nativity on the plains of Bethlehem on that night when our Savior was born! And never overlook their visit to the wilderness, where after Jesus had been tempted 40 days and 40 nights, "behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Yet again in the dark night of His betrayal, when our Lord was enduring the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, don't you remember that, "there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him"? After such things it may seem needless to tell how angels repaired to the tomb from which Jesus had risen and there, at the sepulcher, cheered the hearts of the sorrowing women; or to recount to you the story of Peter, released by an angel of the Lord from the prison into which Herod, willing to please the Jews, and vex the church, had cast him! But I must mention this one thing more: angels were the bearers, not with black wands, but with flying colors, who carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom! Such guard I crave in life and death! I crave it of You, O my God! My soul is enraptured at the multitude of Your loving-kindnesses and tender mercies! Keep me with every provision for my safety! Keep me with all Your hosts and holy troops, with cherubim and seraphim, with providence and grace, and love. "Keep me as the apple of the eye." In such sense, I think, the metaphor is not strained.

2. Secondly, the prayer may be interpreted with a view *to the constancy, the unintermitting continuance of that keeping which we require of the Lord.*

Is not the eye *always* guarded? You are not always thinking of it, it is true, for that would distract you from the duties of life. If you had to reckon the dangers, and provide against the mishaps to which the eyes are exposed, your mind would never rest; but to save you such care, the protections God has provided are always ready; if a grain of dust, perhaps, should enter the eye, immediately, by some wonderful arrangement, a watery fluid is exuded in which, if you cannot extract the impediment, by-and-by it becomes dissolved, and is carried away. Though an intruding substance may pain you, the pain is a mercy, for it makes you restless till you get relief for the priceless eye. When you fall asleep, and are no longer able to protect the eyeballs, the curtains fall, the blinds of it drop down, and the windows are shut up securely with lash and lid; how graciously does God preserve the health of the eye, and renew its brightness! It needs many secretions, and they are all supplied; the fineness of its organization and the variety of its curious arrangements require adequate provisions to keep it in proper condition, and these are all furnished. Yes, and continue to be supplied when the eyes' functions are suspended in your times of slumber; without care or thought on your part, at all times, asleep or awake, the eyes are guarded like the bed of Solomon, about which were three-score valiant men. Right well does the parable of the eye suggest the prayer of the text—Lord, keep me thus, as the apple of an eye is kept; evermore, O Lord, watch over me. Brothers and sisters, permit me to remark here that I believe at no season is a Christian more in danger than when he has just been in communion with God. Thus I have proved it myself; it is not very often I lose my temper, at least I think not, but it has happened sometimes, and I have noticed that when this sinful frailty has overtaken me, it has been just after I have been near to God in prayer. At such a time somebody has come right across my path and ruffled my spirit; something has been said or done so cold, so cruel, so unchristen-like, so irritating, and on the part of myself so unexpected, that I have in horror spoken unadvisedly with my lips. Ah, I should not wonder if many of you have found the same surprising sin assails you. When you felt happy and blessed, beyond the reach of fear, the baneful action of the world has so grated upon your too susceptible feelings that you have felt as if it were well for you to be angry. Always beware when you are rich with divine grace in present *possession*.

The highwaymen, in olden times, did not meddle with the farmers as they went *to* the market; it was when they were coming home, having sold their crops, and bringing back their full moneybags, that they planned their attacks! When our ships of war went after the Spanish galleons, they did not attack them as they were going *to* America, but when they came back enriched with bars of gold; when they knew them to be loaded to the water's edge—it was then they stormed the Spaniard to win his bullion! The devil may not make a dead set upon you when you are poor in grace and lazy, not trading with the merchandise of wisdom, or seriously engaged in the King's business; but if you have had much spiritual commerce with heaven whereby your soul has been enriched, and your heart has been cheered, and your face has shone, then beware of temptation! In watchfulness and prayer, however, put it thus—"Keep me, Lord, alike in my high estate, and in my low estate; keep me when I am engaged in business that I fall not into the tricks of trade, or the excitements of desperate speculation; keep me when I am at the table, that I sin not against You in the midst of social communion with my family or my friends. Lord, where shall I go from the presence of sin, or where shall I fly from the reach of temptation? If I seek the desert and become a lonely hermit, sin is there! If I plunge into the thick of the city, and find solitude among the crowds of men, behold, sin reigns there! If I take me to my chamber, sin can haunt me there; or if I go abroad into the fields, to listen to the voice of nature, I can be seduced to rebel against You there in full view of all Your marvelous works! If I should take the wings of the morning, and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth; if, like the shipwrecked, I lived on a desolate island, and saw not the face of man, even there the face of sin would disquiet me, and rebellious thoughts would rise to taint my daily life." We need keeping, then, always and at every moment; seek protection, brothers and sisters, seek it constantly! Begin not the day without saying, "Keep me." Finish it not without crying again, "Keep me." All day long be not far away from the horns of the altar, to which you may run with the brief prayer, "Keep me, keep me, as the apple of the eye." It means constant care, a perpetuity of divine guardianship. You need that. Seek it—

*“Lord, we are blind, and halt, and lame,
We have no stronghold but Your name!
Great is our fear to bring it shame;
Let us not fall. Let us not fall.”*

3. “Keep me as the apple of the eye.” Does it not mean, “Keep me from *little evils, the dust and grit* of this evil world”?

The eyes need not to be guarded as much from beams as from motes. You would not say, “It is only a tiny grain of dust, therefore let it enter into my eyes.” By no means! The smallest grain that floats in the summer’s breeze will vex and irritate, and cause the scalding tears to flow, and you know, by painful experience, how much suffering you may endure from a grain of sand which you could scarcely see. Be this your prayer, then—“Lord, keep me from what the world calls little sins; Lord, keep me from what my callous conscience may make me think to be little sin; save me, Lord, from thoughts or imaginations, for these are the eggs of which greater mischiefs are hatched. Keep me, Lord, from words which to carnal minds, might seem but air, but which in Your sight are weighty matters, especially as coming from Your children who have been brought up to understand the law of Your mouth.” I like to see the Christian show the rigidity of that Puritan who said that he could not, even in a word, swerve from the truths of God he believed, though there was a living or an opportunity of preferment to be had by complying. “Oh, but,” said another, “others have made long gashes in their consciences; could not you make a little nick in yours?” Ah, you know what those “little nicks in the conscience” always come to! When once you begin the nick, how swiftly it runs from the top to the bottom of your conscience! Beware of nicks of the conscience! Let your prayer be, “Lord keep me! Keep away from me those sins, the wrong of which I hardly know, but whose wickedness and woefulness are open before *You!* Let me never trifle with a sin because it does not look as black, or cause such shame as some other iniquities.” Christians will too often indulge wrong habits, and tolerate doubtful customs till transgressions seem to them as if they were unavoidable, and gladly would they persuade themselves that they are harmless. There was an officer who kept in his house a leopard, a tame leopard, which had been born in captivity, and had never known what liberty was. It had grown up as tame as a domestic cat, till one day when the master was asleep, it gently licked his hand. Now, it so happened the officer had cut the skin during the day, and a little blood oozed out as the creature’s tongue was drawn repeatedly over the wound. The taste of the blood roused the wild demon spirit of the beast at once, and had it not been promptly shot, its once loved master would have been its victim! In like manner those little household sins which look not like the destroyers they are, will, one of these days, reveal their true nature, and you will have to chase them from your soul, and drive them to their native haunts. It is not safe that they should lodge under your roof! Chase them away before they put you into greater danger; they must be doomed or you will have no peace; they must be destroyed, for your life is in jeopardy. When the thief cannot break in at the door himself, he finds a child, and puts him through the little window, and then the great door is speedily opened. Thus do little sins open the door for a great sin; men who have appeared to be immune to open temptations to commit a crime have often been enticed by specious allurements; the temptations have come in the garb of virtue, and their disguise has not been cast aside until the way of escape has been cut off. “Keep me, then, as the apple of the eye,” means, “keep me from little things that defile, and little flaws that disfigure or utterly deface godliness of character.”

4. Do you not think brothers and sisters that *the sensitiveness of the organ of vision* may suggest another lesson to be drawn from this prayer “Keep me as the apple of the eye”? That is to say, make my heart tender, and my conscience quick and impressionable? There is nothing more sensitive than the eye. If anything were moved near your hand or arm in the dark, you might not feel its motion, but the eye is keenly perceptive, even of a current of air; it is affected by anything passing near it, as you may readily notice for yourselves. God has made the apple of the eye thus sensitive for its own protection—that it may shrink from rash exposure. So, if we are kept as the apple of the eye, we shall be endowed with this peculiar faculty—a tender sensitiveness that shrinks with nervous trepidation from the presence of evil. If the eyes grew dull and callous, instead of being impressionable, they would be in immediate danger, and probably would be soon destroyed. The sensibility of the eye is its own protection—it forecasts the

peril, and avoids it. Our hearts, my brothers and sisters, must in like manner, to some extent, carry within themselves, by God's grace, their own instincts of self-protection. Wesley seized on this thought, and paraphrased it aptly when he wrote the verse—

*“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake my soul when sin is near,
And keep it still awake!”*

Are there not some men whose senses are never exercised to discern good and evil? They walk in such darkness that they stumble on a sin before they detect it in their path, or a ponderous temptation will *roll on* them, and overturn them without their once perceiving the headway it was making, or the necessity of making their escape! There are some nostrils that would not be disgusted at the foulest smells, nor would they be regaled though the daintiest perfumes were loading the air with their fragrance. But there are other nostrils quick and delicate which soon perceive the noxious odor; it frets their sense while it pollutes the air. The insensitive are exposed to all kinds of disease and pestilence because they perceive not the danger, while those to whom the fume is repulsive would shun it at once, and never rest till the noxious matter that might have bred disease is removed. We need a *spiritual* sensibility that shall be quick and apprehensive of the faintest smell of sin; only feel that it is loathsome, and you will easily convince yourselves that it is dangerous; you will not require the minister to come down and admonish you of his suspicions, or exhort you to forbear the first indications of a wrong practice, and you will not need a mother or father to say, “My dear Child, that is a treacherous step you are about to take.” The conscience should be a ready indicator—if in good keeping it would be a wonderful tell-tale. It will startle you from your lethargy; it will awaken you as with an alarm, for it will cry aloud, “You are going astray! You are falling into error! You are wandering after evil! You are setting yourself to do iniquity!” God give us this sensitiveness! I delight to see it in young converts. Ah, some of us in the early stages of conviction were half afraid to put one foot before another for fear of doing wrong; O that you could keep up that tenderness of heart! It ought to increase. Be diligent to keep the heart holy, for out of it are the issues of life. With some of you I fear there is a degree of dullness that does not betoken the refinement of your taste in spiritual things. We ought, as we get nearer to heaven, to become more and more jealous of approximation or contact with anything that defiles, abhorring the very *trail* of the serpent—shuddering at even the *appearance* of sin, loathing the atmosphere that is corrupted by evil conversation. O God, keep me, then, like You keep the eye through its own sensitiveness.

5. Should we not make it our prayer, too, that God will *keep us as the eye ought to be kept*? It should be single. “The light of the body is the eye, therefore when your eye is single, your whole body is full of light; but when your eye is evil, your whole body is full of darkness.” Keep me single-minded, Lord, consecrated wholly and devoted alone to You. The eye should be clear; any speck on its retina would obscure our view of the landscape. With “an inlet, so small,” as one of the poets writes, “that a grain might close it,” the eye needs to be cleansed, and God has provided arrangements for this without disturbing the beautiful mechanism of the little orb. Take heed, beloved, that the eye of faith is kept clear. We need to be sprinkled with the precious blood, and washed with clean water often, that we may be always pure, consciously sanctified. The clean water, you know, is the cleansing water which came with the blood from the heart of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. Thereby the conscience is purged, and the heart made clean, actively and passively sanctified unto God. The eyes need to be far-seeing. It is a great pity when the eyes can only see a short distance. We strain our natural eyes to see some ship far out at sea that looks, perhaps, like a speck on the horizon; or we want to stretch our vision far over mountain and valley, river and lake, from some lofty Alp, compassing the entire prospect at a glance! And oh, it is well when our soul can take a wide view, and embrace the grand perspective which revelation unfolds, free from cloud and vapor, not pestered with the cares of the day so as to obscure the immortal joys that await our arrival at the city of the blessed! It is grand when our view is not earth-bound, and absorbed by incidents that transpire within the tick of this clock, but prospecting the fields of light beyond, where moments, hours, days, years, and centuries of years are unknown! Raise your eyes, Christians! Maybe you shall catch a glimpse of the better land—

*“Where everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow stream, divides
That heavenly land from ours.”*

May the Lord keep us as the apple of the eye—sensitive, clean, clear, single-eyed, and far-seeing.

My brothers and sisters, the eye is kept and preserved as an ornament; certainly the most expressive feature of the human body is the eye, and it is the most capable of making the countenance beautiful. Take away the eyes from that fair face, those eyes of hazel or of blue, or those dark eyes that look you through and through, and burn your heart as with coals of fire, how dull, unimpassioned, and senseless it would be! “A beautiful eye,” it has been somewhere said, “makes silence eloquent; a kind eye makes contradiction assent, and an enraged eye makes beauty itself to be deformed, for it is this little member which gives life to every part about us.” Take the sparkling eyes away from the sweetest face, and how sadly you have marred it. Your marble statues—some of them almost speak, fail to convey the impression of life because there are no eyes! That lack of eyes is lack of all that is lifelike. Let every Christian pray to God that as the eye is the ornament of the body, he may be kept as an ornament to the Christian church. What are the ornaments of the church of God? Are they the wealthy and respectable members? Or are they the learned and intellectual members? These, my dear friends, are ornaments from man’s too carnal point of view! They will often secure the most notice among their fellows, but they are not ornaments from *God’s point of view* unless there is something higher to commend them than the accidents of rank or education. The greatest ornaments of the Christian church are those who labor most diligently, those who pray the most fervently, those who are most filled with love, those who are most Christ-like in temper and disposition, the most humble, the most teachable, the most patient in suffering, the most persevering in service—those who commend the gospel of the grace of God by their entire life and conversation—such are the ornaments of the church of God! And the eyes of faith shed luster on all other features of character; I tell you that when spirits more pure than ours go round about the church, and count the towers there, and mark well her bulwarks, it never enters into their thoughts that one part of the building was smeared with the yellow hue of wealth, or that another part of the building was decorated after the classic manner of Corinth and Athens! They only think of the jasper light, and of the sapphire glow of spirituality, and holiness as it flashes bright in the sunlight of God over hearts that have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit! Pray that you may be made an ornament of the church—your light shining before men, being kept as the apple of the eye to shed luster on the saints around, and in your degree to irradiate this dark world!

The eye is not only an ornament, but its function in the body is of the greatest usefulness. How sad a privation is the loss of sight, or to lose even a portion of its power, how grievous the detriment! The eye is in some respects the most useful part of the mechanism of our bodies; it benefits all our limbs. So, beloved, ought we to be profitable and conducive to the good of others. When we pray, “Keep me as the apple of the eye,” it behooves us to remember the real interest that attaches to our preservation; are we worth keeping? Not certainly if we are of no use! Who cares to spare and keep a tree that brings forth no fruit? Or who is zealous to keep an eye that does not see? I suppose those who wear glass eyes would rather not lose them, but I would be bound to say they do not prize them as if they were as tributary to their pleasure and profit as ours are whose eyes are of God’s making, and answer His ends. A genuine Christian will pray to be useful; not to be like a glass eye, a mere counterfeit for appearance’ sake, but being of God’s workmanship in Christ Jesus, that he may be preserved with all his faculties in full vigor, lest his strength would be impaired and spoiled, and his capacity to show forth the praises of God, and minister to the welfare of the church dimmed or utterly extinguished.

My next remark you will, perhaps, think strange and quaint, but as I have not restricted myself to the immediate sense of the metaphor, as limited by the context, I may be allowed to speak of that which relates to the eyes. It occurs to me that Solomon has made this shrewd remark, “The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.” And I would venture to give this a spiritual turn, and in beseeching the Lord to keep me as the apple of the eye, would entreat Him to keep me in *the Head*, that is, to preserve me in *Christ Jesus*! Of what use were the eyes of a man if they were not in the head? They

would have no vitality if they were taken away from the glorious position of honor which is given to them in the countenance of the living man. So if we could be divided from our living Head—if we, as members of Christ, could be separated from Him, it would be all over with us! When we are united to Him, as the branch is to the vine, we flourish; we bring forth fruit. But if we are separated from Him, we are like the dead withered branches that are gathered up and cast behind the wall where all the rubbish is ignobly burned. The best believer in the world would be only fit for the burning if he were divided from Christ, his living Head. “Because I live you shall live also.” So it stands—Christ’s life is our life! The life of the brain is the life of the optic nerve; the eye lives because the brain lives, and because of its place in the head. The life of Christ is the Christian’s life; you live because of your connection with Christ—because of your vital indissoluble gracious and eternal union with Jesus Christ, your covenant Head! Be this, then, your prayer, “Lord, let me abide in Christ, and may His words abide in me; let my thoughts abide in Him; may I meditate much on Him; may my meditation of Him be sweet; let my purposes and resolves abide in Him. May I be determined to follow Him where ever He goes, to be and to do always in His strength. May my desires always be towards Him, desiring to know Him, and to be found in Him—He Himself being the summit of all my hopes, and the crown of all my delight. O let my whole soul be in Him! Then shall I be useful; then shall I be an ornament of the body; then shall I be preserved and kept.”

I commend this prayer to every believer here; you will often need it—you may need it tonight before you get home. Pray it in the pew now, that you may have protection from sin—even as you pass along the streets, that you may be preserved to your own door. I have met with persons who have broken their leg on their own stairs; mind you, do not fall into sin in your own house, where you think you are safest, and at times when you could least suppose that you would be in danger. The Lord succor you, and keep you as the apple of the eye.

Alas, there are some here to whom this prayer is nothing. They are not Christ’s; they have not believed in Him. Here is another prayer for you. It is this: “Lord, save me, or I perish!” The fitness of the prayer is obvious, for the reflection appended to it is true. You are near perishing; if you died tonight, you would perish forever! “Lord, save me.” He can do it! He *will* if you pray to Him; His precious blood is shed for the remission of sins; He is *always* willing to bless sinners. “Lord, save me, or I perish.” Once saved, you may pray to be kept, and He will keep you.

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 17.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

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